

Learning from the Field: Serving LGBTQI2-S Youth Experiencing Homelessness

Presented by:

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Learning from the field, serving LGBTQI2 youth experiencing homelessness. I will be your moderator. I would like to thank you for joining us. It is estimated that between 20 and 40% of youth experiencing homelessness identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans gender, questioning sex. Assume that some of the youth they serve identify as LGBTQI2s -- experiencing homelessness, there a listening tour. Today's presenters, will share findings from a listening tour and offer strategies to implement best practices for serving the vulnerable youth. Funded through the center health services within the US department of health and human services.

The homelessness resource center seeks to help thrive of people affected by homelessness with mental health and substance use problems and trauma histories. I would like to take a moment to show you features of the InterActive web site, homeless.s AMH sa .gov. On the hrc home page find updated content, tips, informs about best practices program profiles and personal perspectives on the work of ending homelessness. Find pages dedicated to finding resources like best practices for providers and information on specific populations experiencing homelessness. The hrc web site, also offer a blog called voices from the field, we know that so much of this work is about people and relationships you build with others. If you are interested in becoming a guest blogger, please contact us. Under the training tab, you can access hrc training resources, the archived podcast and presentation of this web cast and others, today's presentation will be available here within 3 days. You can access free online training modules on the web site. Each module offers continuing education units of credit, strategies for change, modules offer a comprehensive overview of information you need to plan, organize and sustain a comprehensive integrated system of care to end chronic homelessness for people with serious mental illnesses, including substance abuse disorders. Register to become a member by visiting the web site and clicking on log in or sign up at the top right of the screen. Choose to log in by using an account from a social networking site. As a registered member of the community, you can create a personal profile that will allow you to connect -- connect with peers. I would like to share another resource, the health information network or shin. By joining the network you will receive up to the minute information about grant statutes, new resources and campaigns and initiatives. Also order free reports, brochures and training resources by visiting the web site at www.samsa.gov/shin. There is a mental health and substance abuse treatment locator. Call 1877.s AMH sa7, or emailing shin@samsa.hsf.gov. All attendees will remain on mute for the duration of the web cast. We welcome questions and will have time for a question session after the presentation. To submit a question, type it in to the box and click submit question. We will field as many questions as we can at the end. Material will be available on the web cast resources page on the hrc web site within three days. Now, it is my pleasure to introduce today's presenters. Wayne a senior associate at the center for social intervention. He is dedicated his career to working with high

risk and under served population. He is involved in developing policy formulating research and driving training for homeless and under served care providers. He was the medical director of the outreach program at outside in medical clinic a Portland Oregon agency dedicated to bringing innovative services to homeless youth adult populations. Wayne helped to develop a model outreach program targeting high risk homeless populations. Laura Hues is executive director. Responsible for providing leadership and strategic vision for the center. She joined the center in August of 2009. Prior to this role she worked as IV and STD manager at the Wayne county department of public health a member of the board of the 8th partnership mission and alliance and homeless resource network and other leadership positions. Laura has a masters degree in public health from the University of Michigan, she will be joined by Curtis Collin as youth advocate. Bonnie Wade, associate director at the you can host home program has been working in social services for 15 years with youth who experienced trauma and homelessness, drop in centers, schools and a residential shelter, provided therapy, program administration case management and outreach services to reach youth. Bonnie along with a group of volunteers and professionals developed the host home program at you can. Graduate of the Chicago school of social service administration. Bonnie is joined by Malia, a youth advocate. We are honored to have all five here today. Let's turn it over to Wayne.

Thank you very much. Welcome to everyone. We are pleased to have you participating. For a discussion this afternoon is about an issue that's in the last five years become a part of the landscape and discussion of homelessness. For a long time, we understood that the impact of youth homelessness is quite traumatic. We also recognized that there are pockets of youth that experience homelessness in a disproportionate manner. Pockets reach most in to sexual and gender minorities. Estimates are between 20 and 40% of youth who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans gender, questioning, interjects or two spirited experience homelessness. We don't know the full scope of the issue. We do estimate that it has great impact on physical, emotional and mental health. Pathways in to homelessness are difficult to define. For sexual gender minority homeless youth, the primary pathway seems to be familiar disorientation and discrimination. We know that youth who do make their way in to homelessness say stigmatism and discrimination at higher rates than those of heterosexual counterparts. With such a high rate of family of origin, dysfunction, with a growing amount of understanding as the family of origin rejection that occurs, more and more emphasis is placed at reaching youth before they enter the experience of homelessness. To work at the family level on unification, acceptance and working within the developmental cycle. It seems to the research is telling us, even more traumatizing for youth who self identify as a sexual or gender minority with many more youth populations who self identify as a sexual or gender minority experience victimization and violence. As we dig deeper in to the population, and pull out specific units of the population, we are recognized that risk goes higher and higher. Where this brings us on this web cast discussion, is a series of projects, developed and implemented by the homelessness resource center. The first was expert panel. We are very honored to have members of that expert panel participating in this web cast today. The expert panel was an opportunity to bring together researchers, social scientists and direct care professionals from around the country asking them the singular question of what do we know about serving youth to self identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans gender, -- from the information generated the expert panel, from further

documentation retrieved from the field, the homelessness resource center developed a series of topic pages. You can access the topic pages on the web site. Asking the question of where is the information that's made available in research not percolating to providers in the field? A document became Seminal to the work, was a document developed called on the streets. Federal response to gay and trans gendered homeless youth. This was the first to say there can be more done, we need to provide services that are targeted towards needs of youth who are self identify as gender and sexual minority. So the homelessness resource center asked the question, what is being done, at the level of program delivery. That question became the progenitor of a listening tour that went to programs around the United States, had a series of objectives. To review models, to identify promising and best practices of service delivery, and to provide concrete steps that agencies could use to really implement culturally sensitive service delivery to youth who identify in a sexual and gender minority way. Some of the critical findings in the listening tour report include the development of trusting relationships by programs that are fostered from the strength based perspective. The development of culturally competent staff. The empowerment of the consumer in all aspects of service delivery. The design of responsive services that meet the needs of the client and provide interventions that help the client to move towards awe autonomy and self actualization. The expansion of public awareness, so that more can be done at the policy level, and more can be done in prevention. This web cast today is fortunate to have a series of experts. In the bulk of what we hope to talk about today and specifically draw out in the question and answer session, will be born from our experts perspectives, in the anecdotal experiences the first of our speakers is Lora Hughes, from Detroit Michigan, and the Ruth Ellis center. I'm pleased to have Laura and unique perspectives , the wonderful program created. I would like to turn it over to Laura and appreciate your time.

Thank you to even. I'm excited to be here with you this afternoon to share a little bit about the center with you. The center is in our 11th year. We were founded by individuals who were volunteering. They recognized independently they knew a young person who had been displaced, kicked out by parents or runaway and decided to come together and do something. We are located in Detroit and Hiland park, Michigan. It's a 2.9 square mile city that's completely surrounded by the city of Detroit. The yut we serve are reflective of the community in which we are located. I wanted to highlight two unique challenges about our region that dick Kateed our service overview and program design. One of which is the fastest growing incidents of HIV in Michigan for four consecutive years has been among homeless, black, men who have sex with men. Unemployment, 16.7%. Racially stratifyd with the highest rates among African Americans. The Ruth Ellis center was born with a desire to be able to serve youth who came through the door with harm reduction principles and working to improve the systems that are designed to address the needs of youth. The system I'm referring to are the homeless and run way systems and children's welfare system. What you will see as we move in further, Ruth Ellis works within the welfare system. The mission of the Ruth Ellis center is provide short and long-term residential safe space and support services for runaway, homeless and at risk, lesbian, gay, trans gender and questioning youth. With the main program components. Second stories, our drop in center. Last year in our drop in center we served 2535 youth. Over 11,000 duplicated contacts. This is a group of people who come consistently as a safety net provider, about 70%

of services to males, 20% are to females, 10% are to trans gender youth. Between the ages of 13 and 24. 98% African American. 40% dropped out. 40% of the youth are HIV positive. The drop in center is open two days a week, our goal is to meet young peoples base expik fundamental needs for survival. Dinner and a snack, gender identity support group, employment readiness, leadership development, showers, clothing closet, computer system, all the things that are necessary to wrap services around young people. The primary goal of the drop in is to move young people towards a stable housing and serves as our primary referral source in to our residential facility. The second main thing is offers the services that keep the youth in the home involved in school and communities. Our second program component is Ruth's house. We are the only state in Michigan licensed child caring institution dedicated to the needs of homeless and runaway youth. We have two program components within the house, far total of ten beds. Five are for youth between the ages of 13 and 18, this program is called our intensive treatment unit. Young people come in to the program from childrens protective services and foster care. We serve as replacement. The second program is a transitional living program. This is for youth between the ages of 18 and 21. The these people primarily come in after living in abandoned buildings, parks, shelters, under bridges, et cetera. The primary goal for both sides, all young people in Ruth's house is for them to get involved in the school, if that would be through high school or ged program, alternative education programs, following that is employment and we augmented that with volunteering as well. The average length of stay for young people can vary a little bit. The goal is for young people under anal of -- under the age of 18 to stay for 6 to 8 months. Under 18, the goal is for them to stay between 21 and 24 months. I really wanted to spend time talking about the overwhelming challenge that we face here at the Ruth Ellis center. It in the minds of that may not be different from the challenges other folks face. Overwhelming one for us has been around permanence and the ability to move forward towards stable housing options. What we recognize is we look at the young people is that the majority of young people in to the transitional living have had contact with the children's welfare system previously. That'sover whelmingly,100% of the children have had contact. The majority of people who come to us from children protective services and foster care are not adopted. These are people who hit 18 and technically age out of the foster care system. It highlights the work that is necessary for us to do to ensure that people are ready to live independently. Really, along with that, how we work within systems, had not been historically designed to meet the needs of the youth. I wanted to move in to sharing our responses to the overwhelming challenge of permanence. The first one I will share is around creating youth driven spaces. What this means is if you walk in the front door of the drop in center or Ruth's house, from the color of the walls are painted to what is for dinner to helping young people access mental health services that all of this be controlled by young people. Young people who are using our system and garage waited from our services are there on site helping other young people to do the referrals. Some of the great examples for us, has been our youth advisory board that operates the drop in center and the governing board that makes decisions. We implemented housing meetings. I sometimes tease the people that the house is like the real world. We take ten people with different experiences, a lot of things much in common, have them all together. The power of the house meetings is a very therapeutic mog module for the people to talk with each other. The next one is around peer outreach and drop in center workers. Young people who come and actively graduated from the programming or

taking part and want the opportunity to work full time in our center. They help to lead the gender identity support groups, partnered with helping young people to navigate health care systems, for example, et cetera. A third example is out and up front leadership development and advocacy program. As a staff we felt it was wonderful. We were invited to speak with different groups a lot. What we recognize, although our voices are powerful, you needed to hear from the young people. They have the stories that would move folks and deserve the opportunity to advocate for the opportunities that would cause improvement in their lives. The project is specifically working on antibullying work in Detroit public schools and Highland park public schools. Most recently the young people reviewed language that went in to a resolution, reviewed the Detroit public schools antibullying policy, as well as gone through national trainings with the several partners around what is common communication, advocacy and tremendous results, the Detroit city council passed a resolution that's around antibullying and includes gender identity and sexual orientation. So this is I think a real powerful example of what our young people have worked on. I think the next thing I wanted to turn to as an example is really to create a strength based approach and this is with the outcome of having a home like setting. So really this is about creating a flood and a pipeline of trauma informed provider so is that young direct care workers who are themselves I GB tq youth who have emotional disturbance. We contracted with our local community health so the Wayne county community health to provide short and long-term therapy as well as family therapy within our drop in center. This is really to address mental health as a result of the discrimination that my young people experienced as well as mental health experienced by homeless and runaway youth. I think another thing I wanted to highlight is around positive adult role models for one on one mentorship. What we know and research supports is that young people have on average five positive adult role models in their lives. For young people who come in, you ask them for emergency contact or role model, they list their caseworker for example, we need to clearly extend that network for them so if you think of a caseworker who probably has 20 other cases, you clearly will see that could be problematic for the young people as well. The last one I really wanted to share with you, around our responses to the challenge of permanence is around community engagement. We work hard to create meaningful partnerships and increase the number of safe spaces that exist in Highland park and Detroit in our region for youth. Some examples of this include training for children protective services workers, we have done 101 trainings with them, trainings on how to do gender interviewing, potential foster care parents, if you think about in the state of Michigan, there are no required trainings around the youth for foster parents. If you think about our people being disproportionately represented, there isn't a single conversation with foster parents. What happens when I go home and Lora is a lesbian and I talk about my girlfriend with the foster parents. We done those trainings as well. We done trainings with local mental health providers. Some of it has been baseline, for us, it's about a conversation sharing about being a lesbian is not an access 1 diagnosis. Two additional models and bringing to the table research that suggests the best way to provide mental health for young people who have the least amount of access and stigmatized when they come to the front door. School based advocacy. I think working with educators is key. Research suggests in 100% of young people will talk about their experience they have in schools and walking to the bus stop and down the street with other folks, opinions of them, what is appropriate to say to them. A great example of this is we had an educator who called me a little while ago and said I

had a young woman who came in and told me she was bi. I told her great you have double the chances of finding love. Although that is a response that made me smile, I think it was the perfect example of an affirming response where an educator worked with a young person and said that's fine, that's great. What can I do to support you. At the same time they left open the door for what the young person may need in the future. We recognize that young people should not have to come to us to access gender appropriate and culturally sensitive services. They should be able to go anywhere in the nation and walk in the door and get the services. Our work in that has been around creating the meaningful partnerships. I am going to turnover our webinar to Bonnie Wade.

Thank you Lora Hughes for that really piece on Ruth Ellis in Detroit. I'm Bonnie Wade from the host home program in Chicago, Illinois. I'm going to offer up a little background, history, services and a little bit around just what our program and what makes us unique and successful, we think, just some of the things we wanted to share. You can have been a part of the social service community for over 141 years. We began our story in the early 1860 at the onset of the civil war in response to a call from President Lincoln who care for the children from those that didn't return from war. Today we work with more than 13,000 children, youth and families in Illinois and a staff of over 500 employees. We focus on three areas, healing trauma, educating children and families and preventing violence. I want to mention a little bit about our diversity journey we have been on for the last 7 years, 7 to 10 years. That journey has brought the host home program to u can. Within the last 7 to 10 years, staff at u can, clients recognized it wasn't a very inclusive place to work. Staff didn't feel comfortable talking about race. There was awkwardness. It wasn't dealt with in a professional manner. L GB, people, were not coming out. People were -- it one inclusive space. A group of clients or a group of clients who are on staff at the time, some staff members began to organize and dialogue about what is happening. About what was happening at the time. What happened is that staff affinity groups came about. We have groups, a black men, 360, l GB t and allies, alumni of group staff working at our agency who come up through the ranks as clients and now full time staff members directors of projects, coordinators, case managers, aids and leading our initiatives and programs. What that did when we -- created the affinity groups and really came from the bottom up, with the senior leadership team having the they had the support of the senior leadership team. That transformed our agency. What happens now is that it feels like a university setting. Lunch and learns. You will hear people talking openly about race and asking questions, share with me, what is the difference between trans gender and trans sexual. -- trans gender and trans sexual. I'm not saying we are perfect. We are on a diversity journey and trying to do work from a positive frame. From that diversity journey the host home program was born. A group of us who were organizing in 2005, 2006, and in 2007, we began to talk with senior leadership and decided it would be a good fit to bring the program to u can. That is where our program is born. I'm going to click onto the next slide. The mission of the l GB tq is to assist the youth who experience homelessness in the transition to independence by providing community based host homes and support. Sounds simple. A lot of transitional programs across the country are moving young people beyond homelessness in to independence or inner dependance. We work from a nontraditional approach. Our program is based on a phenomenal model out of Minneapolis, the host home program, based out of Avenues for homeless youth. I

encourage everyone to seek that out and speak with the folks running and their wonderful advisory counsel. They have been doing the work since 1998. Here is essentially what we do at the host home program here at u can. It's really simple. We ask people to come together to share resources and that's it. We partner with host volunteers so adults over the age of 25 who step forward and open their homes and Alli youth who experience homelessness. With that stable housing in place, young people between the ages of 18 and 24, are able to focus on education, employment goals, and ultimately we know that this will transition them in to interdependence. I wanted to share that before we get going I want to be transparent and out myself. We work -- we begin within the host home program as a following intersection. Number one we come from an antioppression frame. We recognize that -- oppression -- we take in to consideration the impact of racism, sexism, heterosexism. We as counsel members we aspire to be Alli it is the community of young people and adults we serve. We do positive, come from a positive youth development frame and we recognize that young people are experts in their own lives, but may not be experts in negotiating life institutions, experiences, so we as adults it's like the student driver in the car, if you think of the student driver, the student is in the driver's seat with the hands on the steering wheel, their foot is on the gas, we are going down the freeway. If a struggle comes up, if it's something, if a bump comes up in the roads, the adult, the instructor is beside them and can apply the brakes, our young people are driving what happens. Next a trauma informed perspective. Trauma is used all over the place but what this means for us, is that we get that young people and our host volunteers is going to be a messy process. It's not going to be perfect. We get that people are coming to young people are going to be coming to the host home program who had specific experiences, and have gone through struggles. We take that in to consideration as we aspire to Alli with them. Finally we come from a multigenerational frame work. We work within a multigenerational frame work. I'm going to speak to a little bit later in the web cast. Essentially, we recognize that young adults under the age of 24, adults over the age of 25, come to the table with unique experiences, skill sets, resources. Within that model of a young adult and adult over the age of 25 coming together, with the strong youth adult partnership we infuse that in to every aspect of our program. When I talk a little bit more about multigenerational partnerships you will hear examples of that. In thinking what I wanted to share today, from Chicago, around the host home program, we decided to focus on three aspects of our program that make us what we think is unique and hopefully successful. I want to outline our host home program and share that we are really in the infancy stages. We began organizing around four to five years ago. This is really the first year we are up and running. We moved our first young person in to a home in the winter of 2010, and that young person is just about to graduate in a couple of months from our program. I want to outline myself and be transparent. I wanted to talk about coming from a multigenerational approach. I wanted to talk about youth empowerment and talk about the importance of forming strategic partnerships and build on what my colleague was talking about about building strategic partnerships. Youth empowerment. So within the way we look at how we empower young people or how we, we don't talk about empowerment, we use the word building community or building community, when we think about building community with young adults, we infuse ways they can be empowered or build community in healthy youth. The interview, when a young person comes to the host home program and interviewed to be accepted in to the program, they don't only meet with the staff who is a social worker, myself,

but meet with advisory council member, who is a formerly homeless youth. I want to share a quick story. At one of our first interviews last winter, 2010, we were sitting in the room, the interview room at a partner agency waiting to interview the first young woman who is a trans gender, coming to be interviewed. When she came in the door of the room, she was pretty nervous. We sensed that. She sat down nervously and looking around the room. When we began to introduce ourselves, then the youth advisory council member shared who they were and they were there to interview her, the room shifted. The energy in the room shifted. She became at ease, she began to laugh and started to tear up and shared this us. When she entered the room she thought it was a group interview and going to be interviewing alongside the second youth. When she learned the youth was going to be interviewing her, her confidence went sky high and another thing happened too within the interview, we, let me find my notes. Not only did she become at ease but disclosed more of her struggle. What we learned is that also the young adult in the from our advisory council in the interview was able to ask questions in a way of the young person who is a perspective candidate and hold that young person accountable to the questions and really understand the answers in a way that was much more real and authentic than myself as a social worker sitting across from this young woman. The next is our matching process. We begin our matching process, you will notice that we don't use the word placement, we don't use words that you will traditionally hear within the child welfare system. Young adults experienced struggles within the systems of care. We try to frame how we do our work includingly, which affirm and promote health, healing bonus for our young folk. When a young person is accepted they are spr introduced to a portfolio. If we have one host volunteer or a couple of different host volunteers, we will share a letter that was written by the potential host volunteer and start with the young person and ask the young person to read and determine whether or not they would like to meet that particular person to see if they would be a good fit as a house mate. That also positions the young person as expert. It serves to level the playing field. The next example is house coursesey. We have hard and fast rules. I won go in to those. If folks have questions, that's great. What I did want to mention is our house courtesies. When a young adult and a host volunteer decide they want to do the matching process, become house mates, through meetings initiated by the young person and facilitated by trans social workers. When they decide to move in, they create a series of house courtesies. They serve as a set of agreements that they use to frame how they live together day-to-day. Recently within the last couple of months or three months, I will bring one example of a courtesy that a young person requested off the bat. Knock on the door and wait before to hear a response before you enter my room. What that did for that young person is created safety. They came from a space where there was no respect when it came to just coming in to the place. For them, that was critical for their emotional safety. The house courtesies. Finally, the way we abuse youth empowerments within our program is a life road map. A life road map, again, is we don't want to use language that young people have experienced in traditional social work settings, treatment plans , the life road map is really serves as a blue print for the young person and sets the map for where they are going to go over the course of the year that they live within a host home. The life road map has ten domains. Some are housing, what are housing goals employment goals, education, life skills, legal, substance abuse, mental health. We have a personal goal, social relationship goals that they want to accomplish. We let them really like figure out what it is they want to do. In partnership with staff members, myself, we

review and make sure they have the steps they need to get where they want to go. We truly try and honor where the young person is going. If a young person says I want to do, a, b or c, we know it's good to be a but b might not be the greatest, c is all right but you need to do a first, we encourage them and think through the options but don't force their hand and we let them lead the way. The next thing that makes our program unique is multigenerational approach. This is infused throughout our model. We early on, we came to the decision that we wanted to be a program that was about creating a space where young people can truly transform their lives. We didn't want our program to be transactional. There is a difference between transactional and transformational. If you think of transactional, a young person comes through and gets a bed and a bus pass and case management and move on. We wanted our program to be transformational. We wanted our young people to truly step in to their greatness to quote Dr. Barnes, a youth worker or psychologist here in Chicago, we wanted our young people to feel like they were a part of something big. We knew we had to bring it. Throughout every aspect of our program, we use multigenerational approach. We have young people and adults in the room making decisions in just about every aspect of our program. The clinical decisions is with the young person we are serving and the social worker, myself and the treatment team, but essentially when we are doing organizing and training our outreach, it's done within a youth adult partnership model. We want to model for host volunteer and young adults that step forward to become house mates. Here are examples. We have advisory council, the advisory council is made up of people who some of the folks we have been organizing projects since the beginning, since 05 and 06, some come on within the last two years. The council is made up of formerly homeless young folk and adults who aspire to be allies. Some are psychologists, other adults are just folks who really want to support our young folks in Chicago, help move beyond life on the streets. The advisory council is really vibrant and they truly own the program along with the clinical team. I will give you an example of how that happens. The advisory council early on over a year and half ago, in doing our outreach we came across young people that said it's wonderful but you only go up to 21, I'm 22, I'm 23, I know folks aging out of transitional living programs and there is a GAAP in services. We brought that information back to council and we kicked it around and had dialogue. When I say dialogue, we dialogued. We thought of the pros and cons, everyone's voice had just as much weight. At the end of so many conversations, we came to the idea that we want to raise the age to 24. We want to fill that GAAP Gap in Chicago of having housing program that go up through the age of 24. The next example of the multigenerational approach is host volunteer youth. Our housing model is based on this. Bringing an adult who has been down the street and around the block and then some along with a young adult who is beginning to go down the street and around the block together to share resources, to share knowledge and community and ultimately build healthy lives. Next I will share about our outreach, when we go to do presentations, when we are invited to community organizing events and parades, March in solidarity with folks organizing around different issues, around housing, employment, homeless youth issues we go within a multigenerational frame. What this means on the ground, you will see adult Alli, myself or other adult along with another young adult from the council. We think it important to have both voices at the table. In our training, we have twoties -- tiers of training. We approach the training of host volunteers and young adults who are going to move in, in very much the same way. We have all of our trainings, led by our advisory council members, and youth volunteers

and other consultants and volunteers who want to train the host volunteers again or the young adults. Again, what that does, I'm going to go back to the interview process. When we have young folk to experience homelessness, two years out of the situation, they can speak truth to action and bring the words, their stories and move beyond it creates a different environment in the room. When we as adult allies, stands with them, and say, we are here, we are in it, building community, we are in partnership, it brings different energy in the room. We are modeling what a healthy youth adult partnership looks like. It's not always easy. It's messy. What we do is embrace the messiness. Next I wanted to talk about the idea of building strategic partnerships. At u can, our advisory counsel, we learned early on that we can't be everywhere all the time. So we need to collaborate with other organizations doing work around homelessness, doing work around other issues at the intersection of homelessness, homelessness does not exist in a vacuum. It's systemic and connected to other things, employment, mental health, we knew we had to build partnerships and reached out to churches, synagogues, social justice organizations, we had phenomenal volunteers, both young adults under the age of 24 and adults over the age of 25. I can't join your council but I want to volunteer and get the word out and build community with you. We are definitely developing specific partnerships. One example of a present ship is a -- a present ship -- ship -- -- they serve and help to organize within black communities and so our partnership with affinity what they have done is they have had open house for us. They reached out to folks they knew allies, they knew and invited them to come and learn about the program. They believe in us and signed on to help us do what we want to do. Affinity stepped in, recently when we needed to go to the national gay and lesbian task force conference in Minneapolis in February, they offered up financial backing so we could send nine of ten young people to the conference which was transformational for them. But a more strategic partnership, where we create specific partnerships that serve specific sub groups, I'm going to share something with you A collaboration of service workers here in Chicago, youth service workers serving youth, providers and how manyless youth that come together over the last year and based on the leadership by hello, which is homeless youth living life's obstacles and they have along with mayor daily, wanted to form a committee or commission or collaboration and address homelessness. So you have amazing people at the table. We have all the sub committees. One of the things that's come up specifically from the young people within the collaboration or that group of folk, is that there are homeless college students attending our city colleges which are local two year community colleges, they don't have access to housing and want to do college and make it happen, but housing is a piece that's missing for them. We are looking at ways we can create dorms for homeless young folk, using existing housing structures. Specifically one of the that I think things that's come out a couple of leaders stepped forward and really they loved the u can host home model. They've known about us for a couple of years now. They shared they want to provide space in some of their buildings for college students, I GB tq college students who are looking for safe places. These leaders would live in the buildings themselves and serve as the host volunteer or if you think of colleges that resident assistant, and they would provide space for a young person up to two or three years, so that the person could finish college, whether it's associates or bachelors. That identifying that specific subgroup, homeless college students in Chicago, majority, college students of color, some LGBTQ, some heterosexual. Saying we as adults and youth together want to do something to address this that's how we are creating

specific partnerships. The last thing I wanted to share my final thoughts and this is again how we work from the host home model, I wanted to share with this group of folks, I know, I receive this humbling and a place of humility when I share this, the messiness of the work is the very thing we signed up to do. We embrace that at host home here at u can. When we have struggles we always share the mantra, this is the perfect teacher. We embrace struggle and celebrate mistakes and throw away the notion of perfection and don't believe in that at all. We set expectations high and expect young folk to step in to greatness, it looks different for everyone. To that effect we recognize that each young person is on a journey that is uniquely their own. What I mean by that beautiful people, is simply this, that a young person might come in to the program, and they might stay for six months, that six months might be a little bit of struggle, they might through their own self determination make a choice that they are ready to move. They gotten what they can get from the host home program and ready to move on. Our frame is that a young person can live within a host home between one to two years, depending upon the individual host home that steps forward. If a young person moves out before that year is up, we are okay with that. We will help that young person transition. It's about self determination. Each journey is their own. Success looks different for all young folks. I wanted to say to everyone, thank you so much for really taking time out of your busy days. Time is one of the things that we can't get back. I truly appreciate that everyone is called in to the web cast today. Now, I want to turn the web cast back over to just jees teen.

Thank you Bonnie. Thank you Laura. Before we proceed to questions and answers and just so you know if you have a question yorks can type it in to the qa box in the bottom, we will get to as many questions as we can. Before we turn to questions I would like to turn the floor to curtis Collin as youth advocate and ma LAN jay gills.

My name is curtis Collins I'm a 21 year old male and gay African American involved with the Ruth Ellis center since I was 13. Since 1998. Ruth Ellis helped me as far as career goals maintaining a healthy life and staying goal oriented throughout my life. As a role model I maintain a positive image, and discuss the everyday life of the youth struggles because at the ends of the day everyone needs someone to talk to. Talking to individuals living with HIV to stay positive taking the iv out of hi have and encouraging them to live. During the time I had a fall back where I was homeless sleeping in abandoned buildings, living in shelters and prostituting to make ends meet. When I got fed up with running in to the brick walls that's when Ruth Ellis stepped and gave me a helping hand. I recently discovered that I had HIV. Ruth Ellis helped me obtaining medicine and turning a depressing frown in to a smile. I stayed at the Ruth Ellis transition living program, it made me more independent than I was then. Obtaining a short-term bay care at the academy working on a masters degree in education. They taught me to turn the bad in to good. It made me a advocate for a great cause. Being bullied it made me a advocate for antibullying. Making a change within the metro Detroit public schools for the I GB t community. REITing resolutions presenting issues to the board and council. What I thank Ellis for is expanding my language. Than just using the 3 and 4 letter words I used to use and realizing I can make a change. I was lucky enough to stop. Laura Hughes has been a mother in my life and advocating for what is right. That's my life and experience. I would like to turn it over to miss MA LA nja.

I am 23 years old. I work part time and go to school full time. I also volunteer on the side and activist. I I'm a political activist and I also do a lot of activist work for homelessless, LGBTQ in particular, but all homelessness in Chicago. I've been advocating for youth since I was maybe I want to say maybe 18, 19, 18 I was still a little immature. Maybe 20. I have been knowing Bonnie since I was 18. Through another through teen living programs here in Chicago in which is a transitional living program, which Bonnie was working as, she worked, she was an employment manager. So therefore she helped with resumes and helped us with interviewing skills, right now currently I still use the structure of the resume she showed me. It got me the job I have now working downtown Chicago. She taught me a lot as far as being a young professional and here it is I left Chicago for a while, I was experiencing homelessness, I had to migrate where I could go. It was cold. I wound up in Ohio and did a lot of political activism for the Obama campaign, and I came back to Chicago, there was the program. It sounded like music to my years. I was down for it and ready and committed. Being that I worked, went to school full time, I didn't have much time to commit. I can't be part of the advisory council but I can commit to whatever, outreach, trainings, which I have done, and a little bit -- my motivation in what keeps me going is the whole epidemic of homelessness. I have experienced homelessness and the whole idea that when you are part of the I GB t community, homelessness is like homelessness to the second power. We get it a little harder than a heterosexual homeless youth. It keeps me going. That's why I'm committed to this. The LGBTQ population here and surrounding the homelessness issue has been going on for a very long time here in Chicago, Illinois but ignored for a very long time as well. I feel like now is the time to reduce or minimize homelessness for our LGBTQ youth and to go out, open your mouth, speak to people, build awareness, inform people of the problem of the issue. I figured that this, it's not a issue that we can make just vanish, we can just make it disappear forever, I feel like with hard work and outreach and creating awareness within the public eye that we can definitely reduce the percentage of LGBTQ homeless youth. I wanted to say that now I am in stable, I am stable. I have my own apartment. I have working part time and going to school full time. I am currently doing additional studying on my own time just to kind of cutdown some of the time because ultimately I'm going to law school. I said that so say I up with always here, I wasn't always at this state of mind. It took a lot of professionals to come out and reach out to me and show me that I am capable and that yes you may experience stumbling blocks but u you can do it here is the support. I want to say thank you to the staff that's helped me and not only that but when I first came in to the transitional program, I had a lot of baggage. Basically my family resents me, my whole family. I have so much family right here in Chicago. I pass them by all the time. Hi. It's almost like we are strangers. We are not even related. It's because of my sexual orientation. I had a lot of baggage, emotional baggage that helpedderred me from move -- hinders me from moving forward. It's programs like this helps you to come face to face with your miss. Tough acknowledge it. Second off, come up with some plans and resolutions opposed to just sitting there having a pity party. Not only that, if you don't like something, do something about it. Those are some of the things that I have gained and things that you can't put a price on it. It's priceless. That will never go away. I feel like it will keep me on my journey to success. If I could do that for another youth then I will. So on and so forth. I want to thank you for allowing me in to this conference and hearing my story. I suppose I pass it back to Mrs. Just teen. To our participants and listeners, feel free to direct questions using the chat box. I

would like to transition to our qa session. The first question I have the really directed to everyone, all of our presenters, one of our participants asked what steps might I initiate to makers is vises welcoming to LGBTQ youth. Are there specific things to let the folks know our office and hospitality center is a safe place to turn to?

This is Laura from youth Ellis. One of the things I encourage providers to do is take hard look at your space and make sure that the messages you are sending within the space are open and affirming for young people. For example, do you have LGBTQ magazines. We keep copy of the magazines, there is copies of it, there is copies of between the lines, gay lesbian newspaper. I think that's one thing. I really push for cultural sensitivity training for young people and staff who work with young people. So like my one example and I say this a lot when I work with caseworkers for example, is that if a young person comes in and discloses to you and you fallout, you don't know what to say, you send a message to the young person. It's about physical space and staff responses. If a person comes in, their ID may say Frank but tell you their name is Christina , the first person maybe the receptionist, the receptionist shouldn't be earth shattering, this maybe part of serving l GB tw youth. Go through a 101, examine the physical space and messages they are sending and have staff to do self reflection about their own feelings. Sometimes your own feelings come in to work. Sometimes it's about service provision.

Thanks Laura. I'm wondering if any presenters have thoughts or comments on the question?

This is miss gills. I would like to just, I mean, piggy back off of what she said. A lot of times when you come in to a space, they look around and look at pictures and posters, I would recommends maybe some l GB tq affirming posters or things of that sort. When we walk in to the space we look around the walls and pictures and look at posters. When you see anything rainbow you take a breath like I can relax. That's all I have to say about that, thank you.

This is curtis. I would say having implementing great programs like here at the Ruth Ellis center, recently, we started our poetry program where every you always has something the talk about. They don't always don't want to talk, but putting it down on paper first helps them get the point across, their struggles on paper. Then you can piggy back off of that and have a one on one session with them afterwards on how they are feeling. Having great programs, implementing them in to your center is very productive. Thank you. Another similar question we received is what can faith communities do to engage in supports and provide with safe spaces. Wondering if any of our preseppers have thoughts on engaging faith communities.

This is Bonnie from Chicago, I'm pulling the phone a little closer. One of the things I think that I'm a little surprised by when we go out and share that some of our biggest surporters have been churches, and one of them a catholic church in Chicago, people are surprised. Two of the volunteers came from a catholic church because a priest put out a call through the lesbian and gay friends ministry, saying who is going to come forward and do this host home program. I would say, don't make assumptions. Partner with churchs that have a history of open reconciling ministries. Churches with provide lots of support , there is financial, there is the

volunteer capacity. The other piece is that our young people not all but some young people are spiritually or religious affiliated or leaning, they lean towards religion and spirit chew al -- spirit chute. I would encourage folks to not throw the idea who are working specifically around I GB tw issues to throw the idea of churches away. Church folk are strong allies, and they have proven here with the host home program here in Chicago. Does anyone have suggestions for rural setting where the community is spread out with little or no support systems. This is Laura from the Ruth Ellis center. Clearly I'm in a urban setting. One of the things I find fascinating and I think is a tool that is important to utilize is that every young person coming is on stable housing. Homeless, run away, everybody has a facebook account. Everybody. It's really interesting because it's a net work we use to stay in touch with young people. For us it's about if we don't hear from a young person, like in day, we have staff on line trying to find out where folks are and check in on them. That maybe a tool. Sometimes that may not work. For example, some young people visit libraries and universities and stay in contact. That's a powerful tool and letting them know resources that exist. I would put that out there as well.

Thank you. Now I have a question for the u can program, our participants are wondering if you can talk about how you recruit host families, recruit and screen families, what kinds of challenges you run in to. Another related question, is are they paid?

The Bonnie from the host home program. I'm sitting here -- first of all we don't really use the word recruitment. We come from frame of doing outreach, we think of our self As parter inning with folks. -- partnering with fix. We don't particular like aim for attracting and partnering with families. We are open to anyone individual, a collective, cooperative, group of roommates, a couple, family, but we are hot looking for quote unquote families. We are looking for caring adults who are interested in opening their homes for a period of minimum period of a year. How we have strategically done jut outreach is this, we identified through the advisory council and myself, we identified social justice organizations, faith based organizations, that are working alongside the struggle. It might not be in homelessness. It might be around organizing community, around employment. We partner with those folks. We show up when someone, last night for example, here in Chicago, there was a dialogue happening around marriage, don't ask, don't tell, another immigration in schools, military within schools. People wanted to have a dialogue. We showed up. We built community and listened and we passed out fliers. We know people showing up often times are committed to issues. Again we go to churches, we are invited by some churches, other times we kind of hustle and get out there in front of folks and ask if we can come and present. I will share if with you the outreach partnership, it is a struggle. When we begin original niegz around the project -- organizing around the project, it was a different economic climate. There has always been a recession for a lot of us, but the recession hit home further, when we launched in 09 we were in a different area or different economic space than we were in 05, 06 when we began organizing. It was a little difficult because people that had committed to opening up their home some of those folks moved out of state in the time we were getting organized. Other folks took in family members or friends who lost jobs . It's been a little bit difficult. We ask folks to volunteer to open homes. We have can 10 homes currently, 7 of those homes the young people are able to, by working, earn \$300, which they contribute towards represent. We don't think of it as a stipended. We want to be clear with the

adults and volunteers, this is not foster care, this is community coming together to share resources. Our young people by making good on what they say they want to do, stepping in to the greatness, school, work, volunteer, they earn 300 bucks and they contribute towards represent. That is how we have been able to get around it. I think one of the reasons that we have been able to offer that stipend is we got great -- not stipend, we got some great partners in Chicago, the Chicago community trust, and pope brothers foundation stepped forward to support the project. We receive no government funding. Further you can make a commitment to come up with general operating funds for the project. We feel really blessed that we have pope brothers and also the Chicago community trust and you can be behind us. That's how we do it. It's a constant on going struggle. I will share, we are always out there trying the partner with more adults. If you look at foster care, the only I guess the only comparison is to the foster care system. The majority of young folk are youth in care. Host home are young people housed or homeless. I bring this up to share that our foster care department, we have a licensing department, they've been doing this for decades. Licensing department shared a statistic that they have to get in front of 1000 people to recruit 1 foster family or foster individual. I would say that it's probably true for host home too. Looking at our numbers, how many individual encounters and contacts we had last year, looking at 15,000. We have to really hustle to get those individuals to step forward and get out and build community with people. That's Bonnie and that's my answer.

I would like to add on to that. It's not a walk in the park when you set out to build partnerships with this older, the older adults in the situation. Like she said the economic state we are in, but however, I can say that you will get a yes. I have done a lot of outreach work at a lot of events, all of the events were not LGBTQ events. However I can say that LGBTQ events or not, you have people that are willing to step forward. It's just a matter of you have to be okay with the no's. You have to be okay with the no's and the yes is going to come. I say that, I have spoken with a lot of people, I mean so many people, like just this last summer on behalf of the host home program, but you know, you will be surprised you will be surprised at the responses you will get. The person that you least expect to step up is the person that usually will. The person that you like, you just thinking they are going to, I know they are, they won't. I got to say that it is a journey, but when you do find that yes, it does feel good. It really does. That's all.

Thank you. I have one more follow-up question to the host home program. Some folks on the line are asking about first steps towards creating something like this in their communities. What advice would you give them?

All right. I think first of all, do some home work. Really do some serving and focus groups and see if your community is ready for this. We can talk offline whoever wants to talk in more specifics or detail. I know that Avenues for homeless youth, gotb up there is open, and ready to be resourced. We are open and ready to be a resource for communities that want to step forward and we love to share program manuals and share forms, we love to share strategies, because we believe this is a great model. It's not for everyone, meaning it's not for every young person. There are young people better served in transition living programs. There will also be adult volunteers who will never consider opening their homes. This is a unique model. We are

teeny tiny, ten young people living in host homes. Our hope is to grow to 15 homes by this summer. We are not sure. I would say focus groups surveys in our community, to see if it's a model that can be sustained. One of the things when we were organizing early on, we decided there was just a three of us together in 05, 06, 07, that were doing this organizing work and trying to figure out whether we should bring this to Chicago or not. We wanted to land within an organization. We didn't want to do it as a stand alone small project. We began interviewing agencies and you can was the first agencies we interviewed. We had conversations with them. At the end of the day, I always joke and say we decided to date. We have been volunteering and organizing it since 2007 and in 2009 when we received funding from pope brothers Chicago community trust we launched the program. What I want to share is it's not something just to jump in to it. It's something to think about whether or not your community can sustain this. Once that is in place you need the backing of, infrastructure. We have a 24 hour crisis line that's provided through you can. We have access to job specialists through other programs. Clinical and counseling services. A whole array of programs to access for young folks. Training, the affinity groups, the trainings, lunch and learns. There is a wealth of knowledge. It's bringing the right players to the table. That's my two cents. I would love to have conversations beyond this web cast if folks are interested. Thank you very much. I have a generic question for Ruth and you can program. For programs oriented towards serving populations experiencing homelessness, they work with sexual and gender minority youth but don't focus service delivery. Can you offer ways on making it more inviting. This is Bonnie. I have thoughts. I was waiting for some of the other colleagues if they wanted to jump in. Definitely thoughts. Here are some things some strategies. Number one, I truly, I mean you can, we focus specifically on LGBTQ young folks within the host home program. We were open to serving allies, heterosexual allies, as well. I truly believe in kinds of being within the mainstream, you can is at a nonglbt organization. We are at organization made up of a lot of different people from different backgrounds. Sey verse staff. Very diverse client population that we serve. That's a strength. Here are some ways I think that agencies within serving the general population can provide supportive services. I think you can within our intake assessment and the forms, when a young person comes in, doing the intake. Use gender nongendered specific language. Don't ask they f they have a boyfriend or girlfriend. You can ask, do they have a partner. When you have the option, spell out, are you dating a man or women or dating men? Name it for young people. As adults we sometimes have to take the lead within those meetings. Get it on your forms. I think having from the board, down through the organization, having I GB t people, workshops, definitely staff trainings and development around LGBTQ culturally competent community building or care rather, but I also think it's really important to have out I GB t people on staff. Also heterosexual allies, who are out about being allies. With our group it's not just I GB t group, it's affinity group and allies. It's one more way to be in this world, right. Those are things. I wanted to give space to Laura Hughs, curtis or ma LAN jay.

This is Laura. I think one thing that I would advise, what I see a lot is folks operate really under an assumption that all youth are the same. That makes it for folks doing services, they treat young people, building on all young people are the same. It's okay then on questionnaire to ask do you a girlfriend or I boyfriend instead of do you have a partner. I encourage providers to take a hard look at the policies we have in place. Because a lot of times policies that are

discriminatory are phrased as -- protective. We notify every staff person on at work, we tell by accident when we flag their doors this is the LGBT person in this room, we tell every young person who is in the facility. This is a real life example of what someone shared as they did as a policy as a protective factor. Both human and civil rights violation, also violations of the licensing child care institution rules are clear within that. The other thing I would build and suggest is to work on a safe space. The most powerful thing I seen in a year and a half, is working with the youth advisory board and letting different folks be represented on that. The beauty of young people is they keep you hoppest and humble and tell you what they need if you give them the proper form and support. We really see young people telling us what it means to create a safe space for trans jeppedzer -- trans gender youth. I encourage a youth advisory board to give feed back. We are out of time, a lot of other questions come in that we don't have time to address. Please contact any of the individual presenters, their email addresses are on the presentation with additional questions. [Event concluded] Materials will be available on the hrc web site under web cast resources. The files will be posted within the next three days. When we all sign up you will be sent to a survey about the web cast, complete the questions your feed back is valuable to us and helps us to serve you better. Thank you so very much. Have a great day.